

# Phil Andrews Reports

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## Spotlight Shines on Project SEARCH Montgomery

Last year, I proposed the charter amendment adopted by the voters that will enable our county to be a model employer for qualified people with severe disabilities. Since then, the non-profit organization Seeking Equality, Empowerment, and Community for people with Developmental Disabilities, or SEEC, has made strides in their mission to empower Montgomery County residents with developmental disabilities by launching Project SEARCH Montgomery.

In partnership with the Montgomery County Government, the Ivymount School, NIH, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Maryland Department of Rehabilitative Services, twelve young adults who recently exited the school system were given internships for a year to help them assimilate more easily into the work force.

Interns worked in various governmental departments, allowing them to apply and reinforce the lessons they learned in a classroom setting, with a curriculum designed to enhance their skills as reliable employees.

Interns completed three 10-week programs that allowed them to explore various potential career paths by exposing them to work in different fields, such as working with the Finance Department in tax operations or aiding the Department of General Services Facilities Division in restocking.

Additionally, interns worked closely with two job coaches as well as a full-time mentor who helped these young adults



**Phil stands alongside Milena Vanous, an intern involved in Project SEARCH Montgomery, as the County Council honors the hard work of those involved in the program at its meeting on June 18.**

meet new challenges and celebrate their successes. Programs like Project SEARCH rely on collaboration within the community; if you are interested in joining the effort, you can contact the organization to become a partner and provide jobs directly to interns as a host business.

To volunteer with Project SEARCH, please contact Steve Blanks at [sblanks@seeonline.org](mailto:sblanks@seeonline.org) or Gail Nachman at [gail.nachman@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:gail.nachman@montgomerycountymd.gov).

## Burden Of Proof Bill Challenges The Way The County School System Would Respond Toward Litigation

State Senator Karen Montgomery introduced Senate Bill 691 in the Maryland General Assembly this session, which would place the burden of proof on school systems in due process cases, altering how school systems must respond to litigation brought by parents in special education cases.

The bill has been met with mixed responses from the Montgomery County school board. Montgomery County's school system educates the largest number of special education students in the state of Maryland, with over 17,000 enrolled in our schools.

If the bill were to pass, parents who bring due process litigation would no longer be required to prove that the school system is not providing an appropriate education for their special education students; instead, the school system would need to demonstrate that its proposed education programs are suitable.

Proponents of the bill assert that it would reduce the burden on parents who want to challenge the appropriateness of educational services their students receive.

Additionally, proponents believe that school systems would be more likely to collaborate with parents rather than waiting for legal proceedings, because they would be held to a higher legal standard under the new bill.

In short, they argue that the bill, which has the backing of the Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, would help ensure that special education students in Maryland receive their basic right to a free and appropriate education.

## Restaurant Law Anniversary Reflects 10 Smoke-Free Years

July 1, 2013, marked the 10th anniversary of the passage of the smoke-free restaurant law that I championed. Research completed by Dr. William Evans of the Department of Economics and the Maryland Population Research Center at the University of Maryland and by Dr. Andrew Hyland of the Department of Health Behavior reveals that implementation of the law has caused no significant changes in restaurant tax revenue nor employment.

However, the measures have resulted in significantly decreased exposure to second-hand smoke, which is known to increase the risks of developing various illnesses including lung cancer.

I am heartened by the positive results of the smoke-free law, and pleased that Montgomery County continues to be in the vanguard of local efforts to protect public health.

# Council Approves the Budget For New Fiscal Year

July 1 signifies the beginning of the 2014 fiscal year for Montgomery County and, with a \$4.8 billion budget approved by the County Council, there will be myriad affects across the county.

The 2014 fiscal year will mark a 4.1 percent increase in the aggregate budget from last fiscal year. Among the more significant changes is a decrease in the county’s energy tax.

In 2010, the energy tax across the county was dramatically increased in order to cover the recession-related budget. I advocated reducing the energy tax to improve Montgomery County’s competitiveness and follow through on our promise that the 2010 increase would be temporary. Last year

the council also decreased the 2010 energy tax increase by 10 percent.

Another important step taken while formulating the budget was allotting funds to certain areas that felt the strain of the recession the most.

We continued our robust support of the Montgomery Cares program by setting aside a portion of the budget to help the organization expand its behavioral health services, increase reimbursement for their services, and increase the number of mammograms and colorectal screenings they perform.

While designing the budget for this fiscal year, we also increased funding for education by approving a \$2.225 billion budget for Montgomery County Public Schools, a 2.65 percent increase

from last fiscal year, and allotted \$280 million to Montgomery College, a 4.2 percent increase from last year.

Finally, a majority of the Council also approved Executive Leggett’s compensation plan, through which the majority of county employees will collect general pay increases ranging from 13.5-19.5 percent over this year and next, which will cost the county about \$73 million.

Executive Leggett’s compensation plan contains some serious flaws. The plan will not only cost the county millions directly in increased wages, but these changes will also increase the costs of overtime work and pensions in ways that are not sustainable. I voted against Mr. Leggett’s proposal.

## Sweltering Days and Summer Fun

Free and fun family activities in Rockville and Gaithersburg



4	5	6 Kids’ night at Rockville Town Center	7 ‘The Avengers’ shows at Rockville Town Center	8	9 Gonzo’s Nose play at Rockville Town Center at 6:30 pm	10 Summer concert at Rio from 6pm-9pm
11	12	13 Kids’ night at Rockville Town Center	14 ‘Les Mis-erables’ shows at Rockville Town Center	15	16 Unity Band play at Rockville Town Center at 6:30 pm	17 Summer concert at Rio from 6pm-9pm
18	19	20 Kids’ night at Rockville Town Center	21 ‘Hotel Transylvania’ shows at Rockville Town Center	22	23 Donegal Xpress play at Rockville Town Center at 6:30 pm	24 Summer concert at Rio from 6pm-9pm
25	26	27 Kids’ night at Rockville Town Center	28	29	30 Uncle Jack Band play at Rockville Town Center at 6:30 pm	31 Summer concert at Rio from 6pm-9pm

### PUBLIC SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH: POOL SAFETY

Nothing says “summer” more than spending time at the pool with friends and family. To ensure that your pool-time fun remains safe, follow these tips:

- Never leave children unattended  
Even if they are strong swimmers, accidents happen and the pool can become a dangerous place quickly.
- Keep children and others away from pool drains and pipes  
This is a necessary precaution in order to avoid entrapment.
- Make sure there are rescue devices nearby, within reach for quick, easy access  
This can include flotation devices such as life jackets in addition to cellular devices to quickly call for help in case of a serious emergency.
- When storms threaten, leave the pool and seek shelter  
While many pools will shut down in response to severe weather, if thunder sounds, it is critical that you seek shelter immediately.